Interview with Frederick L. Chapin

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR FREDERIC L. CHAPIN

Interviewed by: Ambassador Horace G. Torbert

Initial interview date: May 25, 1989

[Initial portion of interview not recorded.]

CHAPIN: (tape in progress) The son-in-law had been a lieutenant in the Guardia National and they attempted to oust Somoza the only way that was possible, namely, by assassinating him. Somoza, the elder, Tacho Somoza, was in fact murdered by an assassin with poison-filled bullets as he was leaving a party given at the Casa del Obrero, The Workers' Club in Leon, which resulted in all labor activity in Leon being shut down.

I had some initial contacts who introduced me to local labor leaders in Leon and together we organized the First Federation of Trade Unions which was established under the new Nicaraguan labor code. We followed all of the rules and I stayed in the background as much as possible but [I] sent an organizer up there whom I paid for out of my own pocket, I was never reimbursed by the U. S. Government for it. And, our Ambassador Whelan, who had been the Republican state chairman in North Dakota was somewhat surprised at this but I told him that for an annual budget of $1,500 I could organize the best trade-union movement in the country. Well, when Roberto Gonzalez and his corrinto trade unionists tried to take over the construction union in Managua, the ambassador took me along to see President Somoza and I gave him all the facts, in essence, about Roberto Gonzalez's

background and his communist affiliations. But Somoza, like so many dictators, chose to work with other autocrats and found it easier to work with them than with the democratic movement, and so he supported the communist trade unions and they did in fact sign a collective bargaining agreement with the Managua construction industry.

I had sponsored the first collective bargaining agreement in Leon between the construction industry and the construction union which was part of this federation we established. I was carefully 50 miles away from the final signing ceremony but I had brought both parties close enough together so that it was certain that a collective bargaining agreement could be signed. As I mentioned, Roberto Gonzalez was attempting to organize all the ports and one of the main ports on the Atlantic Coast from which the Longleaf Pine Company was shipping logs to the United States, an American company, was next on Roberto Gonzalez's target list. So I sent the same organizer who had organized Leon over to the Atlantic Coast. It will be recalled that Puerto Cabezas is the port from which our ill-fated Cuban armada sailed. In those days there was nothing but a dirt strip that DC-3s landed on in Puerto Cabezas.

On the second trip over, we finalized arrangements for the trade union federation of Puerto Cabezas and we had a festive occasion and signing ceremony. The trade union federation had provided some difficulties because the workers on the pier, which was being repaired so that it could take our vehicles for the invasion of Cuba and the railroad, were run by former Caribbean nationals and their descendants who were black and spoke English. The taxi and drivers and mechanics union was composed of people who spoke only Spanish and the other two unions which were part of the saw-mill and the lumbermen each spoke a different Indian dialect so it was quite a complicated situation to wield that into one federation but it was successful and we did keep the communists out.

As with the Leon federation, Somoza eventually took over the federations. But for a while, they ran on a democratic basis. In fact, the only person they trusted to count the votes in the election for the first officers of the federation in Leon was yours truly. I have a picture of

me counting the votes with the Nicaraguan government trade representative sitting in the front row.

Q: Sounds pretty Yankee imperialistic to me!

CHAPIN: Well, it was all done privately. They asked me to come in and it was all done on private funds, no U. S. Government money involved.

Q: How did you cut out these funds so that they wouldn't come back and bounce on you?

CHAPIN: No, I personally paid for it and I never was reimbursed. It only cost me $150. That's why I told the ambassador—I could organize the best federation in the country.

Well, another thing that happened early on, fairly early on while I was there, was that the plotting against Somoza in those days was not from the left but from the right. The conservatives were the ones who were trying to oust him and shortly before I arrived in July there had been a vain-glorious attempt by Pedro Joaquin Chamorro and a group of Nicaraguan aristocrats who landed by parachute in the mountains and attempted to mount a coup from there and, of course, they were all rounded up by the Guardia National and imprisoned on the hill next to the President's palace, or at least their leaders.

The next attempt was by Arturo Cruz and some of his cohorts in Diriamba and Hinotepe, two heads of what they called departamentos. They were headed by Jefe Politico, not a governor but a representative of the central power who had virtually total control over those departments. These young conservatives, Arturo Cruz, at the time, was managing director of the Banco Nicaraguense in Diriamba, had this crazy idea which was shared by others that, if the conservatives knocked over the capitals of a couple of departments, the United States would still in old gunboat fashion land the Marines and separate the two sides if they could hold these capitals for two weeks.

I was a much better friend of Arturo's brother, Ernesto, who, by the way, served as my drop for the clandestine communist paper because he had been a Marxist while at the University, as was his wife. There was a meeting at Ernesto's house one evening, a social event ostensibly, and Ernesto and his wife were there, Arturo and his wife were there, and Cree and I were invited. The two Cruz brothers had a sister who was married to somebody whose name I can't remember. Anyway, we all sat around after dinner [and the] theory was espoused that, if they knocked over two departmental capitals, wouldn't the United States land Marines? I said, “This is crazy. This is absolutely the silliest idea I have ever heard. You'll all get yourselves shot, by the way. The Guardia National is much too well organized. This is absurd.”

Well, I got wind that the issue continued to fester, and so the day before this coup was to be launched, I went up to Diriamba and saw Arturo. He pulled me into the social club where we had lunch in the darkest recess he could find, and I said, “You know, this is just absurd as I told you ten days ago. This won't make any sense.” Well, they persisted, and sure enough over the weekend they launched on the Guardia headquarters in each of the towns and temporarily had control. But the Guardia first sent in a column in their newest police cars which we had provided to them because, in those days, aid to the police was not illegal as it became later under the Aid Program. The Guardia National column got badly shot up and ambushed, but force prevailed and the Guardia National was much too strong. Indeed, they rounded up everybody except Arturo and one or two others. I reported all of this, but my sources I refused to reveal to the ambassador, who was the godfather of all the Somoza children.

I had the inside story, not only from having been up there but also one of the prominent members of the taxi union in Managua had relatives who lived in Diriamba and he was the first to bring some of the wounded Guardia back to the hospital and gave me a first-hand account of the initial battle in Diriamba. So there were exciting days.

Q: You should have been put in charge of the Cuban campaign.

CHAPIN: Well, I asked my uncle later, Admiral Kirk, who had been head of U. S. Naval forces in Normandy as well as previously in Sicily, whether anybody had consulted him or any of the other amphibious experts. On his virtual deathbed at Bethesda Naval Hospital he told me that no one had been consulted that he knew of and he himself at the time was working on a CIA project. So that was very badly bungled.

I was out of Nicaragua by the time the actual Bay of Pigs incident took place. I had just arrived in the Chad as charg#. The French high representative, who really worked for French intelligence and had during the war worked for de Gaulle, was very critical of our generals and admirals. Unfortunately, the French generals had just risen in Algiers and so I said to him, “Our generals may be stupid, but at least they are loyal.” And that shut him up.

Q: How did you come then to move? Did you ask to get out, or did they call you out to go to Chad?

CHAPIN: No, I volunteered. They were looking for volunteers to go and open these African posts and I felt that the house of cards would only stand up so long in Nicaragua. So I volunteered and, of course, I spoke French. I had worked and lived in Paris and I'd studied.

Q: The ambassador, of course, was about ready to leave when Eisenhower left office...and you were going to have a change of boss then. Do you have anything you want to add to your previous statements on Fort Lamy or should we skip over that and get back to the Department again where you . . .

CHAPIN: No, I think that Fort Lamy is pretty well covered. I was asked to go down...

Q: Ambassador Chapin, when the tape stopped you said a little bit about being assigned to the U. N., but I'm afraid we lost everything after, so if you'd just like to summarize the fact that you were invited to join the U.N. staff.

CHAPIN: I was asked to go to Washington to work on the United Nations' political affairs even though I was very reluctant to do so because I didn't have the highest respect for the United Nations and its work as it developed. I felt that the United States had very little influence although we had more influence then than we were to have in some subsequent years.

So I reported for work to help prepare for the fall general assembly and was asked to go up to New York for a month, a month and a half, I don't remember, but it was until the end of the session just before Christmas. I had the opportunity to sit on the fourth committee which was largely in charge of decolonization matters. The other more senior members who sat on that committee were all button-holding delegates doing various useful tasks and it was thought that I could just sit in a chair. Well, on several occasions, people raised Puerto Rico and I took exception to the statements and cited the precedence at the United Nations that had been settled earlier that Puerto Rico was an integral part of the United States and that it was not a colony and, therefore, it was not a proper subject for the fourth committee. I was sustained in this by the Guatemalan chairman of the fourth committee and those interventions served for many years as precedence for use in subsequent discussions or [dented] discussions of Puerto Rico. So that was interesting and, as a native born New Yorker, I was very happy to be in New York for a month.

Q: Were they able to pay you per diem then in those days?

CHAPIN: Yes, the per diem was paid and it was fairly inadequate. It wasn't the poverty belt.

Q: I guess, then, if you weren't permanently assigned, they couldn't pay you a living allowance, is that it?

CHAPIN: Well, that's right. That was before the housing was established which was later vastly misused and has been corrected to a great extent, subsequently, as a result of an inspection report we did at the United Nations Headquarters in '87.

Q: Then you returned to Washington and did you stay longer in UN affairs?

CHAPIN: Not very long. I worked for a while on the Congo airlift. The U. S. was involved in supporting the government of the Congo at the time and this was under U. N. auspices and that's where I met Owen Roberts for the first time who worked with me on that aspect. I still didn't get the promised section which had been the one incentive in returning to UNP. I was asked by Bill Sullivan to come up and be interviewed by Averell Harriman who was seeking a new special assistant. Bill Sullivan was anxious to move on. The other candidate who was a very prominent Middle Eastern expert was selected, but he made the mistake of having Governor Harriman sign a letter to Congressman Farbstein in which he took the even-handed approach on the Arab-Israeli question and this led to an outcry by Congressman Farbstein. As a native-born New Yorker, I knew where the votes in New York were and wasn't going to make that mistake and was the replacement of this officer who served for a very brief time, indeed. In fact, I wrote and cleared with some difficulty over in the White House a partial statement which was incorporated into one of Governor Harriman's many speeches and was the only statement on the Middle East made by a senior official during the Kennedy Administration. So that was an interesting task in mediating between the Arabs, the pro-Arabs in the State Department's Middle East division and the Pro-Israeli faction in the White House.

Q: Averell Harriman still had very considerable political aspirations at that time . . .

CHAPIN: I don't know that he had any aspirations to return but he certainly had important clout and he was responsible after Kennedy's assassination for arranging for Robert Kennedy's campaign and nomination as Senator from New York. I remember seeing all the fat cats from New York troop into Averell Harriman's office and, naturally, that was one of the meetings that I did not take part in.

But it was a curious set-up. Just outside the Governor's office, and it's still that way today although there's a curtain that is often drawn across it, is an office where the special assistant sits who controls all traffic to and from the Governor's desk on official matters. And, there's a solid glass wall all the way down so that you can see what's going on and be beckoned to come into the office.

Working for Harriman was a most unusual experience. I had not been sufficiently briefed by Bill Sullivan as to what to expect. He worked a full day and had extraordinary hours for a man who was 75. I had to be there at 8:00 because he would be there before 9:00 and I had to get all his agenda items. He was Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. He saw an amazing amount of foreign dignitaries and took part in a lot of high-level meetings so there were a lot of briefing papers to arrange and, of course, there was the overnight cable traffic.

I would go in as soon as the Governor arrived, and he would stand behind his desk and shuffle papers and look at these briefing memoranda and all the time he wanted me to brief him orally on the most important issues on his desk. He was apparently paying no attention whatsoever to what I was saying, shuffling these papers around, looking in his in-box, and I would go on spouting to this person who was apparently paying no attention to what I had to say, and then I would sit in meetings with him later in the day and my sentences would roll out. Incredible!

Q: He didn't turn his hearing aid off at that time when you were talking to him.

CHAPIN: He didn't turn it off if he wanted to hear what I had to say, but I have seen him in meetings not only turn his hearing aid off but take it out. It was an extraordinary performance.

I was the special assistant who controlled the traffic, but he had Bill Jorden who was his Special Assistant on the Far East and he had Charlie Mackling and a number of other special assistants who had specific tasks assigned and would sit in on those matters. So I was standing in a considerable part of the day being sure that we gave Governor Harriman the material that he absolutely needed to know about and also working on his speeches and other matters which came up for clearance by the Governor and advising him whether he should or should not pass on it.

The most interesting case that I got involved in was a speech which G. Mennen Williams was going to make at Harvard to national radio and T.V. on our policy towards South Africa. Governor Harriman was away on one of his speaking tours when Rudy Agree, who was the Special Assistant for Governor Williams, brought out to my house one evening about 8:30 or 9:00 the text of the speech that the Governor was proposing to make the next afternoon about 2:00 or 3:00 in Boston and I read through the first pages and scanned the rest. Governor Williams proposed to use language about South Africa which we scarcely used toward the Japanese during World War II, and never used about the Germans. I said that I simply could not clear this for the Governor. I said he was going to be back the next morning and the first order of business [was] I underlined certain passages and would discuss them with the Governor and I'm sorry that the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs would have to wait until Governor Harriman had had a chance to look at this personally. Well, in one of these stand-up sessions that we were having, Abe Chayes, the legal advisor came in. His name appeared at the bottom of the list as having cleared it, and Harriman said, “Have you cleared this?” And Chayes said, “Yes.” Harriman said to me, “Fred, you read him that sentence.” So I read him the sentence. “Did you approve that?” Chayes looked very embarrassed. “Fred, read him that next

sentence." And this went on and then Joe Sisco came in. He was then Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and his name appeared as having cleared it. Harriman said, "Joe, did you clear this?" Joe said, "Yes." "Read him the sentence." Well, at that point Chayes and Sisco and I adjourned to this glass-walled cubicle that I had outside the Governor's office and Assistant Secretary G. Mennen Williams came up. Chayes and Sisco began reading this document for the first time. Somebody had cleared it in their offices and they started scratching out great sections and the next thing I knew, this whole party adjourned to the White House to McGeorge Bundy's office where they cut out huge sections and, meanwhile, cancelled national and radio coverage for the Harvard speech. It was a much emasculated . . .

Q: It had all been written, I presume, by Wayne Fredericks, hadn't it?

CHAPIN: I don't know who had written it and never bothered to investigate it, but I am quite certain that if the original speech had been given, South Africa would have broken relations with the United States and for what I considered just cause and which my peers at the Assistant Secretary level when they finally read the speech agreed was not consistent. McGeorge Bundy was even more violent than had been the others, so that was the one time that I think that I really earned my pay and earned an important role in that instance for Governor Harriman. It does show that even a Special Assistant can be sometimes of use in shaping policy.

Q: I think a lot of policy is created by the initial drafter of a telegram which is usually somebody even further down the line.

CHAPIN: I think that was good work.

Q: Fascinating work. Now, did you move over to AID right after that?

CHAPIN: Well, I had been on that job as Special Assistant for two years and I said that Harriman had work habits that were intensive. He was there until 8:00 every night,

five days a week and Saturday he'd come in maybe at 9:30 or so and would stay until 6:00. In fact, I recall one Saturday afternoon he turned to me as I was sitting in his office and he said, “Fred, what are we going to do this afternoon?” And, I thought we had done quite a lot. And, Sundays I had to go down to the Department and read the telegrams, make a selection, and take them out to his house. I didn't have the benefit of any State Department driver on Sundays and had to slog through the slush and whatnot of Georgetown. I was terrified of having an accident and having all this highly classified material on me in transit to the Governor's house and on return from the Governor's house to the Department to lock it up securely. So that [on] Sundays I wouldn't get back to lunch until about 3:00, so this was a 6-1/2 day-a-week job. I rarely saw the children before they went to bed. They were very young.

The result was that, when I was asked by the AID Administrator if I would come over and be the Executive Secretary of the AID agency, I agreed provided Governor Harriman would agree and he did. So I went to work for David Bell as Executive Secretary. But first there was a detour because the Executive Secretary didn't leave on schedule and I worked for the Deputy AID Administrator, Bill Gowan. That job I found to be less than I had expected but there were some interesting times. I did learn about the AID bureaucracy and how it worked and how various kinds of AID applications were handled and it stood me in good stead in a subsequent post.

During this period I was asked to be Deputy Chief of Mission at several embassies and finally my time in Washington was running out. It was longer than most people had been there. So I did accept to go to Cameroon as DCM but then I was found to have a congenital medical problem and the Department would not clear my going abroad and I was treated for about a year and a half and I went on some various administrative assignments including the first two international personnel reduction campaigns during the Nixon Administration. One of those took me on a special mission to Central America where I was to conduct an intensive review of the staffing of the five Central American countries, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala and Panama, and I was able

to make a number of recommendations which saved a lot of money including elimination of an administrative radio network in these countries which was [reporting to CINCSOUTH] in Panama and which did not transmit any classified information, therefore, really didn't have any security function. But each country had a radio station and served to convey administrative chatter and social chatter and commissary orders. . .

Q: A special ham radio network for governmental . . .

CHAPIN: Yes. It was under a private contract and costing millions of dollars a year and a series of other personnel cuts. That was called Balpa 2, Phase 2. One of the things that I did was to recommend that the only military aircraft be located in Honduras where the Air Force played a much more prominent role than in any of the other Central American countries and that the Senior Defense Attach# be the pilot and head of the crew. That remained that way for years and was still that way when I left Guatemala in 1984 and that was a consolidation . . .

Q: That cut out of a crew at least 15 people in every post in Central America.

CHAPIN: Well, in several, in a couple of them.

Q: I discovered it's going to take 15 people for me to have a plane in Somalia and I never had one for that reason. I was damned if I was going to have 15 more people on the staff.

CHAPIN: Well, it was expensive. The housing and everything that went with it, and we also were able to reduce staff to manageable levels. Well, from these various administrative jobs I was asked by Robert Sayer when I finished that tour of duty in Balpa to be the officer in charge of Panamanian affairs. Well, the principal task of Panamanian affairs was to develop proposals for a Panama Canal Treaty in that particular time which was 1968. It didn't look as if Panama Canal Treaty negotiations were likely to be imminent and they were not for several years until President Carter was elected and negotiations began but that was several years hence. So I asked if I could be given another assignment and

I was assigned to be officer in charge of Bolivia/Chile which proved to be much more interesting. It was a combined operation in those days, State and AID, and my deputy was an AID officer and we had the Frei government in Chile, which we were supporting. Ambassador Ed Korry was a big advocate of President Frei and the Christian Democrats and was advocating loans which, we thought, were unsound in economic terms, had some political justification, but we were opposed to some of those in the transition to the Nixon Administration.

I remember going down with Pete Vaky and we argued with — we didn't argue with him, he accepted our position — with William Rogers who said that we could send out the message opposing the $20 million loan to Chile and that he would square it that night with President Nixon. He, William Rogers, had not yet been sworn in as Secretary of State but he gave us full authority to proceed. There was, of course, a lot of traffic about support for the Christian Democrats and others in the election campaign and that's all been reviewed by the Congress, much of it highly classified. Ed Korry couldn't, in the final analysis, make up his mind which side he wanted to be on, which was confusing.

I was Country Director for Bolivia/Chile during both the nationalization of the Gulf Oil Company in Bolivia, which kept me in the office every day for 55 days, and the nationalization of the American copper companies in Chile. The Anaconda Copper Company had very stupidly failed to keep up its payments on its nationalization insurance policy under AID and sought to retroactively pay its insurance which was not permitted. My earlier experience in AID proved very helpful in that I knew the players and was trusted by the players in AID as someone who was sympathetic to AID's point of view. It was eventually worked out that we were not going to come to the rescue of the American copper companies.

Those were the highlights of my service for about two years from September of 1968 until about the end of the year of 1970 when I moved up to be Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management for the Inter-American Bureau. Again it was still a combined State AID

operation and I had an AID deputy who handled AID personnel matters largely. I [also] had working for me as the Senior Personnel Officer on the State side, Joan Clark, who is now the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs and was the former Director General of the Foreign Service. Also, Sheldon Krys who is Assistant Secretary for Administrative Affairs now. So we had a very good staff.

My principal task in addition to or really prompted by the fact that the non-immigrant visa caseload was going up in certain countries particularly in the Caribbean and I had ambassadors calling me constantly about the block-long lines of applicants around their embassy chanceries every day. The only way to get the personnel to fill in to take care of the workload was to close consulates and I traveled around the area and visited all the countries of Latin America and found a number of consulates which were simply not performing any meaningful task whatsoever. They had been left over for historical reasons and we were able to assign those officers or their replacements to help out in these critical posts because we were under an overall ceiling as a result of these Balpa cuts and we had to find some place to get the personnel to handle the task. It made sense to pay consular personnel to do consular work in another area.

The other thing we were doing with the money that we tried to save was we were putting in an automated visa lookout system in the post nearest to us. It was very easy in Europe because you could take a trunkline directly from the computer in Washington to a central point in Europe and then branch out hub from that central point at minimum cost to the other major embassies and consulates and consulate generals that were issuing visas. The transatlantic cost was relatively cheap and the quality of the lines was good. Toward South America in the Caribbean the reverse was true. You had to have individual lines and the quality was poor and we could only gradually extend the system which was a timesaving and local employee-saving device.

Q: This was for file searching and that sort of thing?

CHAPIN: This was for the security checks that saved an enormous amount of time and greatly improved accuracy because you had an otherwise lookout book and there were constant errors and people who looked at this book for an hour or two which was the maximum they could look at it. Then you had to shift them to some other kind of work and shift somebody back on so it was very time consuming and there was no assurance that, in fact, you were getting accurate, up-to-date information. So we started that process and we had also to correct a number of messes left by political appointees who overspent their budget and that was a problem we had to clear up.

I was at that job for about a year and a half, and I had Ambassador Rountree in my office who was looking for a consul general in Sao Paulo, and I handed him a list of people whose assignments were coming up by this time. I had been more than 8 years in Washington, in fact almost 10, [as] Under Secretary for Administration. That was after Macomber said he wouldn't give me any further extensions and I said, “Well, that's fine with me. I've been asked to stay on by the Assistant Secretary for International Inter-American Affairs.” But I was more than ready to go to the field. My problem had been a medical clearance and I was able to talk to the head of the medical division who had treated me when he was a doctor in Bangkok, George Mishtowt, and George said he'd give me a clearance. That was taken care of. I was told that I could be released by the Assistant Secretary and so I went to Sao Paulo's consul general in February of 1972.

Q: That is one of the three or four great consulate general in the world as far as importance and clout and size, I guess, for that matter.

CHAPIN: Yes. As early as the "50s, the consul general had been given a career minister status which at the time was before career ambassador rank. But Senator Fulbright subsequently objected to the concept of having career ministers in Hong Kong and Sao Paulo and a few other places and, as a result, not my predecessor but the predecessor once removed was the last officer to have career minister status.

Meanwhile the city and state of Sao Paulo had grown enormously. People don't realize what a metropolis it is including the satellite cities that already had a population of 12 million. The consular district had a population over 35 million at the time and the state of Sao Paulo alone represents 60% of the industrial production of Brazil and 25% of the agricultural production. It's the banking center and had overtaken Rio in that respect years before I arrived. It also publishes the two most important papers, O Estado de Sao Paulo, which is like New York Times, and Foya de Sao Paulo, which has the largest circulation and has very good commercial news. There is a paper like the Wall Street Journal, an edition called Gazette Americantile and the two weekly news magazines, Vesia, and—the other one will come to mind. Anyway, [they are] like Time and Newsweek and are both published in Sao Paulo. It has many facets.

At the time, 1972, Brazil was in full scale expansion and we were just tapering off our economic aid program and loans were flowing in from the international lending organizations, the IBRD and the IDB, the Inter-American bank. There were 500 American companies doing business in Sao Paulo city with plants, of course, located not only in the city but outside. They were opening new plants at at least the rate of once a month.

The primary function of the consulate general was commercial. This had not always been the case. In 1940, for example, the consulate was not as important as the consulate we had in Santos because all the coffee for the United States was going through the port of Santos and that's where all the steamers docked and you went up by railroad. Very few people traveled by air in 1940. In 1940, Santos had been the principal consulate with those consular invoices on all the exports. Well, by 1972, the consulate at Santos had long since disappeared and the commercial center was manufacturing and American firms were there. Ford and Chrysler had big manufacturing plants and all of the companies that made parts for the automobile industry as well as major chemical companies. There was a big petro-chemical development at Cubatao around the refinery. There was also a government owned steel mill. So the principal task was commercial.

The Department of Commerce had had a requirement until several years before I went down there of developing an annual list of American firms, but they abandoned that and the result was that we had, as a consulate general, lost contact with a considerable number of American firms. One of the reasons was that the multi-national firms were moving from American managers to Brazilian managers and third-country managers. When I first got there in 1972 it was about divided and senior management about l/3, l/3, l/3. But of course, over the six years that I was there many more Brazilians became top managers and there were quite a number of third-country nationals who headed operations.

These managers sometimes met at the American Chamber of Commerce but not always. Many of them were not members of the Chamber as I'll explain. But they did not intersect in social or other circles. They knew their suppliers and they knew their customers and, of course, Sao Paulo was an enormous city. But aside from that, there was very little cross-communication. The American Chamber of Commerce, which had well over 1,000, almost 2,000 members both corporate and private citizens, included anybody who had any kind of commercial interest with the United States and wanted to be a member. Brazilian exporters to the United States and lawyers who had American clients and so on all belonged. The Chamber tended to be dominated by the very big American firms and the smaller firms would sometimes come to the monthly luncheons but did not tend to be active in the working of the Chamber. Many American firms simply decided they couldn't be bothered to join.

We developed this list of American firms by doing research through the telephone books and commercial associations and what not and, after a couple of years, I was able to go into the Executive Committee of the American Chamber on which I sat as honorary President of the Chamber and give them 3 notebooks full of names of companies that were not members.

Q: Incidentally, was it called the American Chamber of Commerce?

CHAPIN: The American Chamber of Commerce, Sao Paulo Branch.

Q: It didn't irritate the Brazilians?

CHAPIN: No, it was known as the AmCham and all of the economic cabinet ministers would come down from Brasilia and use the AmCham luncheons as sounding boards for many of their major pronouncements. Of course, the ambassador would come down periodically every six months or so, and address the Chamber and set forth American economic or financial policy and Secretaries of the Treasury, on their visits to Brazil came to Sao Paulo and gave luncheon addresses. Secretary Connolly came the first year I was there and I had to rush the whole family down in June so that we would be there in time for the Secretary's visit.

Earlier that same year Governor Jimmy Carter and his wife had come down in a special aircraft to establish a Georgia trade office in Sao Paulo and that continued for many years. So one of my first tasks was to give a dinner for Governor Carter from which, at the last minute, many of his Georgians bowed out causing considerable disarrangement especially as my wife wasn't there to help cope. But two of the wives of junior officers were very gallant and stepped into the breach. One of them is a Vice President of Garfinckel's now today.

I took Governor Carter around to meet the prominent people. He addressed the state legislature and, of course, called on the Governor and various heads of trade associations and people he was interested in. Aside from that, he was very active personally with the local Baptist Church.

Q: You had an early in with the new Administration in a sense.

CHAPIN: Not really. I was able to take the Governor around. I was very impressed by him. We were speaking about these roundtables that we had.

Q: First, you had just finished up on Governor Carter. Go ahead with the roundtables.

CHAPIN: The roundtables we had every two weeks in principle and, as I said, we had a cross-section of American companies and usually a lawyer, a member of one of the big 8 accounting firms, and a bank representative. So we had three good experts and everybody was encouraged to talk about his or her company. It was mostly male executives [discussing] how they were doing, how their industry was doing, and what their problems were. As the Brazilian economy began to encounter some troubles, more and more import restrictions were imposed and import substitution was encouraged. On more than one occasion we had American companies who said, “We're having difficulty importing (in one case) glass syringes for these hypodermic needles that we sell.” One of the people sitting around said, “Well, we have a patent to produce those in Brazil but we didn't find a market. Let's talk about it after the session.” Another case, a manufacturer said, “Our real problem in manufacturing is the new plants that we've got. We need better dust collectors.” One of the fellows piped up and said, “Well, we're not manufacturing them here at the moment but we do manufacture them elsewhere and let's get together.” So these served to bring people together as I mentioned.

There was little contact between the three different types of managers, the Brazilians, the third-country nationals and the Americans. And so the lunches that were financed by the corporations and for which they earned brownie points with their headquarters was also an opportunity to bring these people together socially and for them to get to know one another and deal informally and exchange opinions. These roundtables also served as a locus for corporations to bring their senior management, who were often coming down for a plant opening or to see how the company with its extraordinary profits was doing.

One small American firm privately owned came down and made an investment of $l million. It had exactly one product—to seal glass to aluminum frames. Of course, there was a huge construction boom in Sao Paulo. In the first year they made $l million in profit, exactly what their investment was. So there were extraordinary profits and corporate management was frequently coming down and banks were holding their annual meetings. David Rockefeller came down twice and the Bank of America, Jim Claussen, and Morgan Guarantee.

Q: Did First Boston have an office there?

CHAPIN: Not only did First Boston have an office there, they had a bank. Not First Boston, Bank of Boston.

Q: Yes, Bank of Boston.

CHAPIN: Bank of Boston had a big bank which did very well and we often had economists from that bank come to our sessions.

In the first years Brazil was such a market that one of the few things that I was able to bring with me when I went down in February 1972 was the concept that the United States was going to open a regional trade center in Sao Paulo. Not only for Brazil but we hoped to attract people from Uruguay and Argentina and to a lesser extent Paraguay. But in usual U. S. government style the budgets kept being cut and Commerce Department for several years was unable to fund this while sending down senior officers to assure everybody that, yes, indeed we were going to have a trade center which we eventually did open. It lasted there for a number of years and lasted all during the time of the remaining years that I was there. It was a showcase and was a very good source of sales and U. S. participation in Brazilian trade fairs which were concentrated largely in Sao Paulo were also very rewarding to the American exhibitors. Either the ambassador or I would open

these trade fairs depending on his schedule and we had a lot of business supporting those participants.

As I mentioned, there was a big publishing center in Sao Paulo and USIS was busy placing material with these papers. I maintained relations with some of the people, notably the publishers, particularly the two brothers who published O Estado. I was able to get them into the residence of the consul general for the first time in history to meet with our ambassador. We did have some interchange. But they were mostly interested in international aspects of American policy and, while I did receive a number of policy briefing telegrams, I was not cut into the vast mass of telegrams on non-Brazilian and non-Latin American matters and certainly not on a timely basis. I received all the general, a lot of mail stuff which was very appropriate but was not the kind of thing that a major newspaper was interested in. So I was always behind the ball and they had very good informants and correspondents around the world. There was a limited role with the publications aside from the appropriate role that USIS posed.

I also did have to take over the responsibility in improving the management of the consular section because we were not getting any additional personnel and we were receiving enormous increase in non-immigrant visa applicants. Then we had files of some 20,000-25,000 American citizens who, at one time or another, had registered with us and there was a difficult security situation. In the beginning there was urban terrorism in Sao Paulo much like the Tupamaros on a vaster proportioned scale in Montevideo but, nevertheless, a serious threat and nobody had bothered to cull these files. I instituted a mass action of checking these 20,000 odd cards in order to have up-to-date addresses and weed out the people who long since had left Brazil. We had considerable consular activity.

The other thing that I did was to travel around the consular district which, as I said, had 35 million people in it and was as large as the United States east of the Mississippi. It originally took in not only the states of Mato Grosso and Parana but also supervisory

responsibility over the consul we had down in Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul and the state of Santa Catarina which, he being alone, really never got to.

The Brazilian government was then a military government but the heart of the opposition to the government parties, the NDB, was in the south in the more urban and developed areas of Brazil. I would travel the interior and visited all the cities over 100,000. There were some 22 when I arrived in the state of Sao Paulo alone. There were some 32 when I left and would make it a point of calling on the mayor and the official party. Then I insisted always on having equal time and trying to see the officially recognized opposition party. Naturally, I didn't deal with the communists but the officially recognized opposition party I did try to see on every occasion. It was not possible in the beginning when I made my first trips around Sao Paulo state to find anybody who acknowledged that they were the organized leaders of the opposition party. But eventually the word got out and in subsequent years I did meet with people and those individuals became mayors of the cities and then some of them became governors of their states and senators. In fact, the governor of Sao Paulo is a man I first met when he was mayor of Campinas and everybody said he wasn't going anywhere and then he became senator and then governor and there's a possible presidential candidate.

Q: What was the system then? Did you report back to Rio or Brasilia or did you report directly to Washington?

CHAPIN: It depended on the ambassador and the pressure from various sides and his establishment at the embassy. The theory initially was that we could report to Washington directly on any matters concerning my consular district so that the Sao Paulo reaction to this or that went directly to Washington. We didn't always report by telegram but sometimes by airgram but directly to Washington. Obviously any policy suggestions had to go through the embassy and we were very careful to steer away from . . .

Q: You sent them dropped copies, I suppose.

CHAPIN: Oh, yes. They got immediate copies of the telegrams and then the section heads from the embassy came down all the time to Sao Paulo, the political counselor, and particularly the treasury attach# to deal with the various banks, and the economic counselor. We did have for several years the commercial attach# in Sao Paulo reporting to me and to the ambassador [for] the labor work. While there was a labor attach# in Brasilia, the trade unions and the day-to-day contact was through the labor officer that I had on my staff because that was where the bulk of the trade union was. Then at various times we had to feed everything but the simplest sort of thing out in political matters through Embassy Brasilia. Obviously on commercial matters and some economic matters we reported directly.

Now, there was an agricultural attach# in Brasilia—the U. S. Department of Agriculture maintained two offices in Sao Paulo—who did a lot of crop reporting and they did that directly to Washington on their own hook. We also had some debate over coffee reporting because there was a national employee in Rio who continued to do the coffee reporting and the coffee was all grown down in the Sao Paulo consular district and he never bothered to check in with the consulate general in any form. The export trade, of course, was in Santos and there were, as far as the growers were concerned, some associations in Londrina, the second largest city of the state of Parana. I had my regular contacts and would report directly to Washington and to Brasilia on what my contacts said. I didn't elaborate beyond that but I would go and interview them periodically and what they had to say was often at marked variance with what the national employee was avoiding from Rio. This led to some concern. I wrote a scathing indictment of the reporting by the Department of Agriculture which I sent to Brasilia pointing out many inaccuracies in their reporting and this caused a big brouhaha. The Assistant Secretary for economic affairs in Washington, E. Bea, had a fellow named Carlisle assigned to look into this coffee matter because accuracy in coffee reporting. We were an important importer and an important member of the International Coffee Agreement. I thought it did matter that all views and not just the selected views gathered by a Brazilian national employee whose sources in my own

consular district I knew nothing about. He would never pay me the courtesy of stopping by to see me to arrange his visits. In fact, often he didn't give any advance notice of his travel which was totally improper. I was anxious that all views be known to the United States government and I did represent the United States at the annual Guadojob International Coffee Conferences and had to know what was going on.

Political reporting, particularly developing contacts with the opposition took an important part of my time. I would say, out of a year on various trips because I had to go north and south and then there was the state of Sao Paulo itself which is as big as West Germany, I would say that I was away on the average of about six weeks of the year. But I did tend to concentrate my travel in the years in which there were elections either local elections or national elections and provide the embassy with a feel as we saw it from the countryside. We were able to maintain better relations with the president of the opposition party who came from Sao Paulo and who would come to lunch regularly while the embassy would only see him every now and then.

Q: By this time had you added Portuguese to your list of languages?

CHAPIN: Yes, they gave me an intense course at the State Department which they had to convert Spanish into Portuguese. In fact, one of the great utilities from my point while I started traveling almost immediately upon my arrival and before Cornelia came down was that in the interior I was forced to speak Portuguese. I spoke initially a Portunole mixture of Portuguese and Spanish but that goes down to the fact there were people prominent in the Sao Paulo Chamber, AmCham, who were of Argentine birth and they never spoke anything except Spanish with about 200 words of Portuguese mixed in. I didn't have any problem with the Argentine Spanish but the Brazilians didn't have any problem with people talking Spanish. It was the Spanish speakers who had a great deal of difficulty understanding the Portuguese speakers on the whole. But, yes, and then I took lessons for a while in Portuguese at the consulate general until we ran out of money.

Q: Then eventually all good things must come to an end. You've already covered pretty well your time in Ethiopia. How did you get picked out for that?

CHAPIN: Well, by a series of curious circumstances unlike somebody in trances as I think they say in the “Mikado,” the Lord High Executioner. I had been considered, my friends told me in Personnel, for various chiefs of Mission posts for about a year and a half and I was going crazy. They would all go up to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Habib, and he would every time cross off my name saying he never met me, he didn't know who I was. So an elaborate scheme was conducted by which Personnel brought me up to be in charge of a promotion panel for senior secretaries and the whole purpose of that was to arrange an appointment for me to meet Habib. I went in to see him in the old office that I knew so well where Harriman had held forth and we had a five minute conversation about absolutely nothing. I can't remember to this day. And, at the end he said, “That's fine. You can have the AID job.” Personnel at the moment was cooking on the issue of an ambassador to Ethiopia but it wasn't at all certain that we were going to have one and we had been without one for a year and a half and the human rights problems were very much to the fore. The whole question of compensation for American nationalized properties is much less so, as well as there were military claims which everybody was very confused about and remained confused for quite a while after I arrived in Ethiopia.

They first offered the job to my cousin, Roger Kirk, and then they suddenly remembered that he'd been ambassador to Somalia and that that wasn't going to be a very good selection. And so I was kicking about and they said would I like to go to Ethiopia and I said, “Sure, I'd be happy to go anywhere.” I went on back to Sao Paulo, this was in the fall of 1977, then we went off for Christmas vacation off in the mountains up in Ninashireyes. In order for a consular general to be on vacation, of course, you've got to get out of your consular district because, otherwise, you're technically in charge wherever you are and subject to instant recall. When Senator Javits came down suddenly, even though I was in the neighboring state of Rio de Janeiro, I was yanked back and so the idea was to

get as far away in the mountains as possible and not have to be recalled. So we were having lunch on Christmas Eve and the phone rang and it was Dick Moose who was Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and he said, “Would you like to be ambassador to Ethiopia?” I said, “Yes, sure. What shall I do? Shall I pack my bags and go on back to Sao Paulo? When do you want to see me? When should I start briefing?” He said, “Well, you know, relations are very tenuous and we don't know for sure whether this thing is going to develop. Stan Patton will let you know.” Well, the first thing that happened was early in January I got this pound of papers that I should fill out as ambassador. I filled that out rapidly and sent that in and then I waited for a couple of months. Word sort of began to leak that I was leaving and the Governor whom I kept meeting was an old, not an old friend but mutual friends, kept saying, “Well, but you don't go.” Meanwhile, I'd gone up to Washington for a conference to brief ambassadors going into the field and ambassadors designate and we went everywhere including the CIA safe houses and all that sort of thing. I came back to Sao Paulo and I sat around and waited some more.

Q: That was quite a trip to take for a little briefing.

CHAPIN: No, it was a ten-day, two-week course that they did for the ambassadorial course.

Q: Oh, yes, this was what Dave Robb was running?

CHAPIN: Well, they instituted it, I guess, at his time or shortly thereafter but it was about 10 days, 2 weeks of being talked at and then traveling around to various places. Finally, there was a decision to that we were going to have an ambassador and, in fact, it was only toward the end of May that I came up to Washington for the briefings to begin.

It was July when we went to Addis. But it was touch and go during this whole period. Mengistu would make very anti-American speeches and Secretary Vance testified to Congress that the Ethiopians were causing a great deal of difficulty in the Horn of Africa and there was a nasty reaction from Ethiopians and so we sent a special delegation from

the NSC and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs out to talk to Mengistu. Matters were in constant flux and, as I say, the Treasury Department, as I told you before this interview began, wanted to invoke the Gonzalez Amendment, which it had full authority to do, which was to vote “no” on an international loan to Ethiopia. The Gonzalez Amendment had been patterned after the Hickenlooper Amendment. No vote was required if a country failed to take appropriate steps to compensate American persons, private and corporate, whose property had been nationalized and, for four years, the Ethiopian government had been unwilling to do anything or enter into any meaningful negotiation. And if Treasury invoked the Gonzalez Amendment which it had full authority to do although there was an inter-agency committee, this triggered the Hickenlooper Amendment which, in fact, terminated economic assistance as opposed to humanitarian assistance to a country. It was very difficult once it was invoked to remove unless there was really a settlement of nationalization claims which, in the case of Ethiopia, until December of 1985 although on the terms I was advocating back in 1978 and early 1979. So that's how I got to Ethiopia.

Q: What were the immediate circumstances to your leaving Ethiopia?

CHAPIN: Well, there were a number of high crimes and misdemeanors on my part which were alleged by the Ethiopian government but my official conduct was defended publicly by the U. S. Government and I was well received in Washington on my return about the 15th of August, 1980. It was very late in the Carter Administration and I was informed that the only job which was available for me was a newly created job as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Latin America. The new job in Defense Department was important because there was a state of undeclared war between the Departments of Defense and State over Latin American policy. The Defense Department was far more hawkish than the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs led by my friend, Bill Bowdler. On the other hand the man for whom I was going to be working in Defense, Dave McGiffert, was a man I'd known since college days and had seen off and on in Maine over the intervening years. He was a brilliant lawyer who worked for one of the best law firms in Washington

before he took on the job in Defense and was extremely able and knowledgeable in the field of international security affairs.

It was only going to be a short-term assignment because it was most likely that the Reagan Administration would want to make its own appointments. Nevertheless, it was not always certain that career officers would be replaced at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level. I reported for work in September and soon found that, while I had a marvelous title, there was very little for me to do as there was an excellent staff of military officers quite senior. In fact, my deputy was a brigadier general soon promoted to major general who ran the entire staff. I was allowed, however, to handle relations between Departments and was able to bring about a good understanding between the Pentagon, both sides of the Pentagon, both ISA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department.

One of the ways I was able to do this was that the Department of Defense had earlier commissioned a strategic study of American interests and priorities in Latin America by Margaret Daley-Hayes who later worked on Capitol Hill. Miss Hayes had developed a very convincing schedule of priorities or interests which I was able to incorporate into all of the planning documents up to five years with the agreement of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and ISA and the wholehearted support of the Department of State. For the first time in many years the Department of Defense had a comprehensive and consistent series of policy documents with regard to our activities in Latin America.

Q: This applies to all of Latin America or just Central America?

CHAPIN: This applied to all of Latin America. The other things that we were doing were to attempt to simplify the command structure on the military side in the Western hemisphere. Naval matters beyond the low-water mark in the hemisphere are the purview of the Commander-in-Chief Atlantic, CINCLANT, who is assigned to Norfolk and who is the Supreme Allied Commander for Naval Forces under NATO whereas the military assistance groups and all land matters were either purview of the combined command,

USCINCSOUTH in Panama. However, with the ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties, the role of USCINCSOUTH should have been examined in greater detail and was beginning to be examined by the Defense Department. Our conclusion was that the command in Panama should be restricted to those elements consistent with the Panama Canal Treaties which dealt with the defense of the Canal and other ancillary tasks involving the supervision of the various military assistance missions and the operation of the schools which had been in Panama for years and which had trained a large number of Latin American officers and, in some cases, technicians, should be moved from Panama or we should, by treaty, obtain extensions of the limited period for those schools to continue set forth in the Panama Canal Treaties.

Thus, I proposed that our popular ambassador in Panama be authorized under Circular 175 to begin negotiations with President Torrijos because I didn't believe that we would be likely to find a future president of Panama who would be as easy to negotiate with as Torrijos although there were many problems in negotiating with him. This came as an enormous shock to the entire Pentagon bureaucracy who never heard of the authorization for negotiating a treaty in the Circular 175 and, certainly, that it was totally inappropriate for an ambassador representing State Department—they overlooked the fact that he represented the President—for a representative of the State Department to negotiate on matters of U. S. military schools.

Q: But certainly most of the base agreements in history have been negotiated by ambassadors.

CHAPIN: Well, they have been negotiated largely by military teams but the concept of requesting approval formally was alien to everyone that I met with, and particularly the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to my great surprise. We were never successful before my departure in getting approval of those negotiations and with the end of the Carter Administration the whole issue lapsed. We also attempted to eliminate the command which had been

established under President Carter's Administration at Key West which was totally superfluous and had technically a planning role for the Caribbean.

Q: Was this an Army command, a Navy command or a Joint command?

CHAPIN: This was a Joint command. General DeCamp and I toured the various commands—CINCLANT at Norfolk, the command at Key West, and the U. S. Navy command at Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico as well as the base at Guantanamo and USCINCSOUTH at Panama—and carefully reviewed this accompanied by a representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who agreed with us that the Key West command was totally unnecessary and that the authority of the command in Panama should be reduced. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, opposed the concept vehemently and, while we made considerable progress in getting our recommendations through the civilian side of the Defense Department, we did not obtain Secretary Brown's final approval before he left office in early January of 1981. But it was an interesting 3-1/2 months that I had in the Pentagon.

Q: Did you feel, generally, that it was a successful idea to have cross-fertilization? They equally had military men in some branches of the State Department including the planning staff, politico-military section. Did you feel that had a future to it at the time?

CHAPIN: I felt that it was an important assignment but that there was a limited ambit for me personally. So much of the day-to-day work was being done by these very competent officers assigned to me and that it was only in certain specific projects which I've just mentioned and which were highly sensitive that an outsider could display initiative and provide another view.

Q: So then just about at the beginning of the new administration was the time when you were called on to go to El Salvador?

CHAPIN: Yes, it came about in a very curious way. Prime Minister Seaga from Jamaica came to the United States in the very early days of the Reagan Administration and was received officially here in Washington. There was a reception for him at the State Department to which I was invited in my Defense Department capacity and there I ran into Deputy Secretary Stoessel who asked whether I was enjoying my job at the Defense Department. I told him I was frankly bored because General DeCamp and his associates were doing most of the work. Two days later I received a call saying that Secretary Haig wanted me to go directly to El Salvador to take over in the first days of February of 1981 from Robert White who had been summarily recalled by the Administration for having too liberal views for the incoming Administration. He had held some press conferences but it was the tenor of his reports and views which made him unacceptable even had he maintained those privately. I went to see Secretary Haig immediately and he asked me to get there right away. I persuaded him that I had to wait a few days because Mrs. White was still at the residence and packing out and the only place I could stay for security reasons was at the embassy residence. The Secretary, in the meeting that we had, outlined very extensively my priority tasks in El Salvador and furnished me with a letter which I was to take to the President of the Junta, Jose Napoleon Duarte. These instructions were comprehensive for virtually my entire stay in El Salvador.

Initially the stay was to be only a month and a half, but it was extended to almost four months because of the inevitable delays in confirming the ambassador who had been selected, Dean Hinton. I was always regarded as simply an interim senior officer sent to hold the fort until Dean Hinton could arrive and not needing confirmation, but the Administration was anxious that this be viewed as a high-level assignment and so I was described to the press as Deputy Ambassador, a job which only existed in Saigon, I believe, during part of our war days in Vietnam. The Latin Americans, however, understood the concept of a charg# d'affaires with the rank of ambassador and I was very well received by President Duarte and all the members of the government including the military high command.

Q: That was an interesting and rather difficult thing to get over in the beginning, the concept, I can certainly see that.

CHAPIN: Once arrived in El Salvador the press of business was so great that there wasn't any time to worry about the niceties. I was told to re-examine and make recommendations about the size and scope of both the military and economic assistance programs and also a possible program to interdict the fall of arms into El Salvador across the Gulf of Fonseca from Nicaragua and, indirectly by air, either across the Gulf or over Honduran territory. The latter proved to be an almost insoluble problem given the geography and the mountains and mountainless islands in the Gulf of Fonseca so that we had to concentrate primarily on increasing the military assistance and economic assistance. It proved easier to increase the military assistance program although not to the levels which would be attained in subsequent years.

The fiscal year was already well under way by the early days of February and re-programming of AID programs is extremely difficult as I know from my experience as Executive Secretary at the AID agency. We were able to get half of what we recommended but we kept up the battle until I left on May 26 and Dean Hinton continued to advocate greatly increased military and economic assistance on which he was successful as the years went by.

Q: What was the timing of the election? At the time you went there Duarte had still not been elected. He was just the head of Junta.

CHAPIN: As there was a Junta which was composed of two members of the Christian Democratic Party, one independent and one army officer. In fact, the electoral commission was established shortly after I arrived and electoral laws and the whole process had to be started. One of my tasks was to push along that process in which I was successful and early on I received assurances from the military high command that they would

endorse free and fair elections as well as international observers from the OAS and other organizations.

Two other priority matters which I had to attend to were the prosecution of the cases against the unknown murderers of the four American church women who were killed in December and the two American land reform experts who were murdered in the Sheraton Hotel dining room in early January of 1981. First of all, we had to find some clues or some evidence which would lead us to the murderers. We suspected and had some indications that the persons who had perpetrated both crimes were part of the military either on active duty or off-duty. It was the off-duty security service members who constituted the so-called Death Squad. And, we rather suspected a death squad in the case of the land reform experts and uniformed, probably National Guard members, in the case of the church women's murder. But there was virtually no evidence available. Fortunately, with regard to the church women's case, we eventually developed a “Deep Throat” source in the Salvadoran army who gave us the names of the six persons of the National Guard who had been on duty at the airport at El Salvador the night that two of the church women arrived from Managua and were met by two other church women who were working in El Salvador. With this specific information, I was eventually able to get the Minister of Defense to arrest the six individuals and confiscate their weapons and take their fingerprints. Once the weapons were in hand and the fingerprint charts available, we sent this evidence to Washington to the FBI laboratories where the weapons were used in ballistic tests to compare the results with spent bullets which had been found at the initial grave site of the four murdered church women. The only fingerprint which was found on the vehicle in which the church women had been traveling proved to be the thumb print of the commander of the detachment of the National Guard at the airport that night and one of the weapons of the other members of the detachment proved by ballistic tests to have been identical with the weapon used in shooting one of the church women.

In the case of the two land reform experts we were equally lucky. One morning the Defense Attach# was having breakfast at the Sheraton Hotel with one of his military

contacts when one of the waitresses who had befriended a member of the American Military Assistance group said to this young soldier that the person having breakfast with the U. S. military attach# was one of the persons who had been present the night the two land reform experts had been murdered in the hotel dining room. The waitress in question was the person who had served the American experts and their Salvadoran contact and had been a witness to part of the whole scenario. The details are rather complex, but with her testimony we were able to make some progress. None of the principals of the case, that is the intellectual decision-makers, were ever convicted. But the two off-duty members of the National Guard who were summoned to the hotel by Lieutenant Lopez Sibrian and who actually carried out the murders were eventually tried and convicted although they were amnestied by general political amnesty shortly after they were jailed in El Salvador. The ultimate results were not satisfactory to the United States, but during my time, during the three and a half months, I was able to advance the land reform case with the invaluable assistance of a former FBI expert hired by the American Institute of Free Labor, AIFL. In the case of the church women, the action of the Minister of Defense represented the first time in Salvadoran history that any member of the armed forces was ever arrested or detained for any human rights violation or any major crime of a non-military nature.

Q: It must have been an extremely delicate job presenting this evidence to the government. How did you go about that?

CHAPIN: Well, there were a series of meetings with President Duarte and he was most cooperative. It was he who had instructed the Attorney General to dig up the original burial site and find the ballistic evidence which linked eventually one of the members of the detail at the airport with the crime. It was more complicated to deal with the Vice President of the Junta, Colonel Gutierrez, who was a defender quite naturally of the interests of the armed forces. Colonel Garcia, the Minister of Defense, was a very rational person who took very seriously the evidence of military involvement in both crimes and was most cooperative in making the arrest — or it was really initially not an arrest but detention of

the members of the National Guard detail at the airport. The most delicate problem was getting the Minister of Defense to assume responsibility for the arrest and go public with it. I could have covered myself with a great deal of glory by announcing that the Salvadoran government had arrested the persons responsible for the church women's murder, but I insisted that I would not do so and that the Salvadoran government had to make the announcement itself. When Minister Garcia finally made the announcement, he attributed the information on the basis of which they were detained to international agencies and totally omitted the U. S. role which was perfectly acceptable to me and extremely sensible. But it is not something which has enhanced my public image, but I nevertheless believed it was the right course of action.

Q: Credit is a great thing to have but it doesn't always win the battle. So were there any other major things that you dealt with while there? You've already done 4-1/2 months' work, I think.

CHAPIN: Well, there were revisions of the assistance programs, as I mentioned. There was pushing the electoral process forward. There was the advancement of the two American human rights cases. And, there was one other instruction which I had which was to nurture or foster a broader government in El Salvador and I worked very hard at this and had some initial success with the business community and with the trade union federation. But the negotiations between them broke down and the Christian Democrats were not very receptive to additional support from what might be viewed as the democratic left and the rather moderate to conservative right. Dean Hinton continued those efforts but as we compared notes in subsequent years, neither of us was really successful in broadening the political base of the coalition. This, however, is not an unusual fact as far as Christian Democrats in Latin America are concerned. Frei and the Chilean Christian Democrats only ever solicited the support of another political party on any issue during President Frei's tenure in Chile. On one occasion, and that was to pass a national wage law, the party whose support they sought was the equally autocratic Communist Party of Chile. The Christian Democrats in Latin America are autocrats, they are not really

democrats so that there is a lot of puffery which has gone on with regard to the Christian Democratic government of El Salvador and also a lot of excessive euphoria with regard to the Christian Democrat President of Guatemala today, Vinicio Serrano. Serrano was elected in free and fair elections but this does not mean that he does not owe his continuance in office to the full scale support of the military which have always dominated Guatemalan life. Serrano is not a real democrat but a practical politician who is prepared to deal with the facts of life as he finds them.

Q: Are there any non-Marxist, non-communist, socialist parties in Central America?

CHAPIN: Well, in Salvador there are some minuscule parties represented by Ruben Zamora who split off from the Christian Democrats and by Ungo who represents the Social Democrats. But those parties are described as being van parties. The critics maintain that all of their members would fit in one Volkswagen van. The recent results of the presidential elections confirm that there are only very small minorities of people in Salvador who support these left-wing parties. One of the efforts that I made was to see that these parties were specifically included in the original elections laws which were developed during the early days that I was in Salvador.

There's one final chapter which has to do with land reform in El Salvador and the United States spent hundreds of millions of dollars attempting to support Phase 1 which had to do with the nationalization of the largest properties in Salvador and their conversion into cooperatives and then a program called Phase 3 which would give properties that were being leased or sharecropped by farmers at the time of the nationalization of the larger properties to the sharecroppers or tenants and the owners of the properties would be compensated. But this was for the small scale tenants and sharecroppers up to 17 acres. The program eventually benefited some 400,000 people in Salvador but was not as extensive as had been originally hoped. The program was developed by American experts who had been active in land reform programs in Taiwan and Japan and was of limited success. Phase 2, however, which was to be the nationalization of intermediate

size programs was not carried through. I was a strong advocate for not continuing with Phase 2 because it would disturb the agricultural production of El Salvador and vastly increased the amounts of balance of payment support and other support for the Salvadoran economy which the United States would have to provide. President Duarte himself was very clear on some of the limitations of the land reform program which was strongly advocated by his own party. Clarence Long, the Democratic Congressman from Maryland, came down to Salvador early in 1981 and had a very frank series of exchanges with President Duarte about Phase 1 of the agricultural reform. Congressman Long was very critical of the establishment of these large scale cooperatives and advocated that the land rather be distributed to individual peasants. Duarte, on the other hand, pointed out that if the Salvadoran government were to do so, the peasants would simply plant subsistence crops, corn and beans, and would eradicate the coffee bushes, would stop planting cotton and sugar, and the country would have not only no cash crops but very few exports so that the effort was made to improve the lot of the peasants through the creation of cooperatives. Administratively, however, the persons appointed to run these cooperatives proved to be largely failures and many of the cooperatives had to be abandoned progressively or were destroyed in the process of military operations.

As I mentioned earlier, we poured and continue to pour as far as I know still are pouring hundreds of millions of dollars of economic assistance to attempt to make the agricultural program, largely the land reform program, work. Fortunately, Phase 2 was never really implemented and some of the most serious consequences for the economy thus were avoided. I'm very happy that I was among those who strongly advocated the formal notification to the Salvadoran government that the United States government could not support financially the implementation of Phase 2.

Q: Now let's go into the transition from Acting Ambassador to confirmed ambassador. How did this work out?

CHAPIN: Well, I was offered a variety of choices, none of them particularly appealing, the best of which was ambassador to Guatemala. Secretary Haig had told me in January when I agreed to go to Salvador that upon completion of my service I would be taken care of. But the kinds of places that the Department seemed to have in mind for me were: the high altitude post of Bolivia where there was an intractable drug problem which to this date has never been solved—in those days we were not pursuing it actively); Beirut, where war raged and continues to rage; and Liberia, where there had just been a coup. Of the various choices, Guatemala seemed to be the one which I thought would be the most appealing to members of my family and, while it offered a deteriorating situation and an inhospitable government with which we had had very limited relationships, nevertheless I was willing to take it on. We had not had an ambassador for over a year and we had a . . .

Q: By that time it was 15 years since Gordon Mine had been killed.

CHAPIN: Yes. It had been some time.

Q: So that wasn't a problem at all.

CHAPIN: No, but the insurgency was increasing. There had been some improvement in the interim but insurgency was increasing and there were murders on the street of Guatemala City as well as massacres in the Indian populated mountain areas. The United States had very limited programs in Guatemala. Guatemala had renounced U. S. military assistance in 1977 because of the attitude of the United States toward human rights violations in Guatemala and, despite major efforts, even a cash sale program was not effectively revived in Guatemala before I left in March of 1984.

On the economic side, also because of human rights violations, the United States was simply providing assistance to the poorest of the poor. This was a category of really humanitarian assistance rather than developmental assistance. It represented authorizations including PL 480 surplus agricultural products of about $9 million a year for

a population of some 8 to 9 million people. But actual disbursements from 1978 through 1981 only averaged $3.5 million which is absolutely nothing in economic and macro-economic terms. In fact, the benefit that Guatemala received from preferential treatment under the sugar import quotas in the United States exceeded the effective economic assistance which it was receiving for the least advantaged or the most disadvantaged sectors of the population, largely programs in the Indian dominated rural areas.

Q: Did you go almost immediately to Guatemala or was there an interim period?

CHAPIN: Well, it took a few months for the usual briefings and approval by the Senate so I left Salvador at the end of May and arrived in mid-August 1981 in Guatemala and was there until early 1984, not quite three years. In Guatemala we had problems with regard to the murder of two priests, one of which occurred before my time, and the murder of other American citizens before I arrived, and threats to the American missionaries, notably the Maryknolls. This was not unique as far as American missionaries was concerned. The priests and nuns of the Catholic Church in Guatemala were largely foreigners and they were suspect and many of them had to leave.

Q: Were there a lot of Irish or were they Latinos from other parts of . . .

CHAPIN: No, they were Europeans. They were Belgians, Italians and representatives of various nations but largely not other Latin American priests and nuns.

We also had a number of problems with Americans who were arrested illegally and charged with crimes that they had not committed of a security nature. One was a young American who was charged with leading a bank of guerrillas even though he spoke only a few words of Spanish and was demonstrably in Panama on the date that the event that he was charged with having committed actually occurred. We had a great deal of difficulty getting him released and his case became involved under the government of General Raosmond in a series of summary executions by firing squad after minimal trials. Fortunately, I was able to bring enough pressure on the Raosmond government so that the

American was eventually released. However, I earned the undying enmity of the Minister of Defense, a senior military officer who was over the special military tribunals that had tried the American. That general was to succeed General Raosmond and my relationship with the succeeding government was anything but happy. Nevertheless, I'm happy to say, all the Americans who were detained—peace corps volunteers, visiting protestant ministers, the young American I mentioned, all of them—were released after relatively recent periods of time and none of them were tortured and none of them were killed. Q: Did you have some further detective work to do there, producing evidence for some of these things?

CHAPIN: Yes, the investigative services in all Central American countries are rudimentary. We had problems with American citizens, but we even had more serious problems with Guatemalans who were employed by an American AID contractor who had a program for the bilingual education of Indians and others in local languages and in Spanish. Many of the Indians in Guatemala, or over half the population, really did not speak Spanish at all and this, of course, excludes them from the central path of Guatemalan life. There are professional anthropologists, many are Americans, who really advocate that the Indians be left alone but, in my view, this is an impractical suggestion in modern times and leads to a continuation of vast discrepancies in income levels and cultural levels between two halves of the population of Guatemala.

Q: Is it nearly half and half or aren't there more Indians?

CHAPIN: There are really more Indians. Of course, there's never been an adequate census so it's very difficult to say what the population is in the mountainous areas. When we talk about free and fair elections, we should remember that, because of the administrative and logistic difficulties, polling booths are not established in the predominantly Indian areas high up in the mountains, and less than a half of the potential voters actually have access to the ballot. It is not like El Salvador where the Indians have

been incorporated into national life and polling opportunities are available in all areas except those totally dominated by the guerrillas.

The Guatemalans who were killed by the Guatemalan government, and in this case specifically by the Guatemalan military, total 8 of whom several were directly employed by an AID contractor and others were family members of those persons so employed or peripherally connected with the bilingual project. We never were able to obtain any kind of apology from the Guatemalan government for these murders and I was, in fact, twice withdrawn as ambassador back to Washington as a protest against the murders.

Q: Was it anti-American or was it something they had been doing extracurricularly?

CHAPIN: The Guatemalan military have always been suspicious of any efforts to improve the lot of Indians and incorporate them in the society. In the first case, there is some evidence that the AID contract employee was a lawyer had given some advice to some mine workers in the area where he was working the bilingual project and that the mine owner had appealed to the Guatemalan military to take care of the individual concerned. This led to his arrest and to his disappearance and eventually confession by the Guatemalan government had indeed killed the four individuals—the lawyer concerned, the driver of his vehicle, his brother who is tangentially connected with the project, and the mother-in-law of the brother who was hitching a ride in the jeep.

In the other case, there were two women who were picked up off the streets who were associated with the project and the motive for that arrest is unknown. Subsequently, another member of the project and his wife were detained under unknown circumstances. Three of the bodies turned up in a vehicle in a staged accident in the northern part of Guatemala as part of a scenario that the four had sought to establish contact in Mexico with members of the guerilla opposition. For many reasons we were able to disprove the entire theory and the press and all independent observers in Guatemala concluded on the basis of the evidence which we were able to produce from family members and other

sources that the death was not as a result of an automobile accident but rather that the three persons found in the accident, the so-called accident, had been driven to the scene of the accident and an incendiary bomb had then been thrown into the vehicle after they were already dead.

Again, I did not earn any great credit with the Minister of Defense.

Q: Granddaughter of Isabella.

CHAPIN: As a matter of fact, the Minister of Defense who, by that time was Chief of State, Mahia Victoras, made a point of denying to me the standard decoration which is issued to all ambassadors who had been in country over two years. The subsequent and popularly elected president, Venicio Serrano, some four years later in a special ceremony here in the Guatemalan Embassy, awarded me not only the medal which I would have been entitled to but the Grand Cross of the Order of the Kedzal in a special ceremony to make up for this insult.

Q: In August of 1983, was it?

CHAPIN: August of 1983, yes. Mahia Victoras took over in a relatively bloodless coup in August of 1983 and I was recalled in November of 1983 over the second series of murders and the staged automobile accident which was—no, as a matter of fact, over the second series of arrests. The staged automobile accident was to come later in 1984. I did not return to Guatemala until January of 1984 when I was really returning to be caretaker. The new Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs, Tony Motley, had decided that there should be a new ambassador, and a political appointee who had long sought the job, in fact before I was appointed to Guatemala in the first place, was appointed to take my place.

Q: Who was that?

CHAPIN: That was Ambassador Piedra.

Q: I noticed there was something in the newspapers about the time of the coup that Mahia Victoras was visiting an American aircraft carrier the day before the coup. Was that a major story or was it just something accidental?

CHAPIN: There had been a decision to send a carrier task force to the Pacific coast area off the Pacific coast of Central America for some time. This soon became involved in the command difficulties which I outlined before with regard to U. S. military forces. The task force was, of course, under Navy command and through appropriate military channels an invitation had been issued, that is the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I assume. I was informed of the invitation but was not the conduit for the transmission of the invitation to General Mahia who was the Minister of Defense. He was invited along with the other Ministers of Defense in Central America to go on board the carrier on a weekend and the U. S. Commander CINCSOUTH in Panama had decided that it was a fortuitous opportunity to invite the various Presidents of Central American countries to go out to the carrier on Monday.

Well, immediately following the visit of the various Ministers of Defense under Navy orders the carrier task force plunged deep into the Pacific and was out of helicopter or plane range (or would be out of plane range) of the Central American coast on Monday morning. I learned of this by chance and protested to Washington on Saturday that it was totally impossible politically to have the Minister of Defense visit the carrier and for me to go and tell the military President of Guatemala, a general, that his visit on Monday was cancelled because of operational considerations. I was able to turn this matter around with a great deal of pressure at the high levels of the State Department and a great deal of bad feeling in the Defense Department, but political considerations finally outweighed operational considerations and the carrier task force was turned around and was back in sufficient distance so that planes from the carrier were on the ground in Guatemala City on Monday morning and I was out at the airport to bid farewell to President Raosmond. When the

coup actually occurred the airplanes from the Air Force base where I was were already in the air fully armed and the helicopters were flying over the city.

The difficulties between President Raosmond and the military had come to the fore about a month earlier and President Raosmond had told Secretary of Agriculture Bloch a few days prior to his prospective visit to the carrier that he had almost been ousted by the military at that time. In fact, Secretary Bloch's entire visit to Guatemala had been designed in early July to show the personal support of President Reagan for President Raosmond. The visit was successful as far as it went but the difficulties within the military, President Raosmond's extensive support for the protestant movement in Guatemala and his difficulties with the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy there as well as his mercurial behavior all contributed to the inevitability of his downfall and it was just a question of time. We had been speculating for some months prior to the actual August coup as to when such a coup might occur so that, while the specific date was not anticipated, the visit to the carrier had absolutely nothing to do with the coup.

Q: Did he actually visit the carrier?

CHAPIN: No, he did not. The coup was occurring.

Q: It must have made it look at the time as though the United States was party to this operation.

CHAPIN: There were efforts to give that spin and I was very active with the media in pointing out that this was nonsense. In fact, I used a Central American term when queried by the press. I said it was [babo sarras, poras babo sarras] which means “nonsense” and was thoroughly discussed in the press for my correct use of a rather arcane Central American Spanish usage which is nevertheless sanctioned by the Royal Academy of Madrid, and was incorrectly translated as an improper term by some American

correspondents in their stories to the United States. Nevertheless, we were able to show that there was no connection whatsoever.

Q: Then you left there in early 1984 and I know that you devoted another four very active years in the service and they were very interesting ones. I don't know how much you feel you can talk about some of the things you did in the Inspection Corps where I know you had some major investigative problems but, if there are any highlights, I think it would be very useful to this series.

CHAPIN: Given the nature of the work in the Inspection Corps, I don't think that it is appropriate to go into details for this historical project and, without the details, the generalities really are not very interesting except perhaps some philosophical remarks.

Q: I think that would be very interesting.

CHAPIN: I was shocked at the extent of the minor peculation in the executive offices of our posts around the world and, by that, I mean ambassadors and, not so much DCM's, but ambassadors and consuls general and their wives, either personally obtaining benefits to which they were not entitled or insisting that American and foreign national members of their staff violate the laws and regulations and provide them such benefits. I was indefatigable in routing out such abuses wherever my inspection team went.

Q: For example?

CHAPIN: I mean buying rugs for the residence when no funds existed on credit which could not properly be extended; decoration of residences beyond the levels authorized by the Department of State or by the embassy in the case of consulates general; the misrepresentation of the amounts of money spent on representation in the case of a number principal officers; the misuse of travel funds in other cases requiring subordinate officers to sign vouchers which they believed to be fraudulent; and such extreme cases as the use of public monies and public time for the construction of a coffin of the finest

wood which was tin lined for the dog of an ambassador's wife which had not yet died and this was fished out from under the bed of the ambassador's wife while she was out of the country by a “Deep Throat” source and appeared on my desk in brown paper on top of my in-box so that I had to take official cognizance. But while that appears amusing, there were many similar cases of, as I say, minor peculation. They did not amount to more than thousands of dollars but funds were misused and regulations were loosely interpreted.

We tightened up, as a result of our findings, or we caused to tighten up a whole series of rather dubious areas in the regulations, which permitted these clear violations of the intent of Congress and the intent of the regulations. But there were fraudulent aspects to many of these cases. It also showed that it was virtually impossible under the laws and regulations to discipline let alone prosecute any of the people who had committed these various crimes. The Justice Department considered all of these violations of regulation, or in some cases law, to be of such small magnitude that they simply refused to prosecute any of these cases.

Q: So no action was taken against these individuals?

CHAPIN: That is correct. In some cases initially we obtained reimbursement from the individuals for the amounts which we showed them to be inconsistent with law or regulations. However, the legal advisors office became very queasy about this procedure and caused the Inspector General to instruct his inspectors to cease and desist from attempting to obtain reimbursement from the individuals for these misapplications of funds on the line of reasoning that the individual inspectors were placing themselves at very substantial risk of suits by the individuals. And, the United States government was reluctant to finance the defense of the inspectors which, in my view, mitigated or greatly reduced the role or the function of inspectors. We felt that certain object cases and object lessons, if even circulated by the grapevine, would lead others to be more careful in their actions. And, indeed, I believe that we have improved the use of both official residence expenditure funds and representation funds. For instance, we had one consular

general for [a] fourth of July party, [who] instead of charging the rental of a tent for his party to representation, charged it to ordinary administrative expenses and described it as a temporary windscreen and this was approved by the budget and fiscal personnel at the capital who did not bother to look any more deeply into the voucher even though it represented some thousands of dollars.

Q: Why was a windscreen any more innocuous than a tent?

CHAPIN: It wasn't. It was an attempt to pretend that this was an administrative measure necessitated by natural weather conditions as a protection of the property or the personnel of the consular general. It was deficient on the part of the administrative personnel in the capital but it also showed that, as we found on many occasions, the embassy and the capital had only the very sketchiest idea of what was going on consulates or consulates general and that the principal officers at some of these posts had even wider scope for personnel peculation than did ambassadors at their own embassies.

Q: Now there is also nowadays as I understand it in the Inspection Corps, a mandate to inspect programs and objectives and country policies, is there not?

CHAPIN: Yes, that's correct. We did that but in general the Foreign Service is quite capable of managing those programs in a substantive sense. The problems occur often in excessive staffing to carry out the task and sometimes, also, an insufficient staff. This situation varies, particularly in consular operations where workloads can suddenly shift a number of non-immigrant visa applicants can suddenly rise as European currencies rose in value against the dollar and vacations in the United States became much more attractive financially causing posts in Europe to devise or have to devise on the spur of the moment entirely new operating procedures in order to be able to cope with this flood on applications. Other posts, for example, had turned into backwaters but personnel had not been reduced to correspond with the decreasing load and there were defenders of the particular posts who had emotional reasons for that for seeing that the post was retained.

Q: Either in the Foreign Service or in Congress.

CHAPIN: That's correct. There's the Deputy Assistant Secretary who had successfully kept alive a consular post which should have been closed many years ago because he was principal officer at that post. And, there is another senator who is very actively supporting a post at which he served in 1947. This kind of interference with proper management is to me seriously regretted and it is only the inspectors who are independent who I believe can at least repeatedly give their independent view. Now, we found one consular post which also is maintained largely because of political support in the United States in which there have been 12,000 non-immigrant visa cases where no American had ever looked at the cases. While this was alright as far as most of the applicants for tourist visas were concerned, there were a considerable number of cases which were persons who were rejected at the port of entry because they clearly did not meet the criteria under the laws of the United States.

Q: Which certainly shows at the very least a failure to instruct the locals. The locals probably were giving the instruction to the Foreign Service officer anyway.

CHAPIN: The officer concerned was also one who was involved in personal peculation. There tends to be a correlation, but not always, between a rather cavalier attitude toward official duties and a rather cavalier attitude toward the official funds entrusted to the individual. But I was frankly shocked by the extent of this and I'm sure that we only touched the surface and encountered the most egregious cases. Our teams only visited the post for a relatively brief time and conducted the most superficial of audits. It was not a full scale audit. But in some cases we were assisted by whistle blowers and in other cases we came upon these matters in a fortuitous manner. We have attempted to pursue criminal cases against some of the most grievous offenders. So far I've not heard of a single conviction.

Q: That certainly would be a difficult thing to convict on, I would think, considering that most of the evidence is broad.

CHAPIN: We have had in the consular field successful prosecutions of national and American employees who have sold visas.

Q: I had a case like that in Salisbury back in the "50s.

CHAPIN: That has been successful. One ambassador who has currently been reappointed finally plea bargained with the Department and settled for reimbursement of some $4,000 worth of clearly improper travel vouchers which he had submitted.

Q: On the whole did you enjoy this service as inspector. From the travel point of view it has a great deal to recommend it.

CHAPIN: The work is extremely onerous and the head of the inspection team has the very difficult responsibility of presenting all of the difficult recommendations to the Chief of Mission and to his deputy and justifying the findings. The work became increasingly less pleasant and more difficult and, in efforts to reduce the amount of time the inspection teams were abroad, there was virtually no time even on U. S. national holidays and weekends to take any advantage of the cultural aspects of the countries that we were visiting. We were working in many cases seven days a week and often well into the night particularly during the last three or four days at post. It is not an easy task by any means.

Q: Do you have any final views on the Service? Would you start all over again? Would you recommend a son or the son of a friend to do it?

CHAPIN: I'm very interested in the two reports, summaries of which appeared in the Washington Post this morning. I think it's very interesting that both of the committees recommend abolition of the cone system. I've been doing that since the cone system was initiated. I think that it is far too rigid and leads to isolation of officers along a given track.

I think that it's true that certain officers should predominately have assignments in the consular area, economic area. I think there's a lot of self-selection in that. So I welcome that aspect. I am, however, very seriously concerned about the recommendation that much less emphasis be given to both the written and oral examinations and that more weight be placed on the so-called probationary selection boards. On the first point, I think we risk getting a lot of Dexter Manleys by that route. I think it is totally unacceptable that a student was carried for four years at a state university when he was certainly unable to read at any high school level.

On the question of the review panels for probationary officers, I've been chairman of such committees on such selection boards on occasion and I can tell you that the officers are rubber stamped and that there is a minimum of information and that supervisors tend to give young officers the benefit of the doubt in almost every case. Certain officers prove totally unsuited to the Foreign Service and by that a percentage, something like 2% or 3% per annum, do leave. But this is insufficient to give flexibility in the service and those officers who receive poor ratings inevitably go to the Grievance Board and there are long appeals of critical remarks which are made in their initial evaluation reports.Therefore, I believe that only some of the automatic ceilings which have been imposed on time in grade have any hope of weeding out in a practical manner those officers who are less qualified to serve in the Foreign Service and I think that the recommendations as a whole will result in a great deal of discouragement of junior officers and will lead an increasing of the ablest officers not to opt to come into the Foreign Service at all. I do think that reducing the waiting time between passing the written examination and an actual offer of appointment from two years to six months is long overdue, but that is a technical problem. Should we reduce the testing procedures, I think we will wind up perhaps not with illiterates but we will open the possibility of political and pressure group influence on nominations at an early stage.

Q: And lack of breadth in background, too, probably, of candidates. That is, if you don't test them over a broader range of background, you won't have any assurance of getting them.

CHAPIN: Yes. I served on oral selection panels and we often were predisposed to pass a candidate if he or she could answer a few questions. On encountering a candidate and talking with him or her we found that he or she was so narrow that their interests really lay in a very specific kind of career and not the multi-faceted career which was the Foreign Service, although the Foreign Service in principle needed economists and other specialists. I particularly think of a graduate of a Northeastern university, one of the best, who was active in a series of econometric programs, but on interview proved to be a person far more qualified to serve in the Census Bureau than in the Foreign Service.

Q: One of my favorite _____ of the modern Foreign Service personnel technique has been the performance/pay concept. What's your view on this? I know why it was put in because it was the only way they could get the money for top level people but it doesn't seem to me that the concept is particularly appropriate for diplomatic performance.

CHAPIN: The program, of course, is a government-wide program and while there are abuses in the Department of State and the Foreign Service and inevitably the persons in key administrative jobs receive performance pay as well as those who are closely linked to the high command of the Department of State. The abuses I think are much less than in what I've seen reported with regard to other government agencies.

Q: I must say it's more of a psychological feeling with me than any really scientific analysis. But it seems to me that many of the things that a Foreign Service officer is called on to do, such as in your case not claiming credit for trying people in El Salvador but making the Defense Minister do it, that sort of thing, wouldn't get you any performance pay but was what you should do. And if you'd announced it yourself it might have made you more subject to performance pay _____.

CHAPIN: Not only performance pay. I think it would have greatly raised my profile in a most beneficial way for my own career.

Q: At least temporarily.

CHAPIN: Well, yes . . .

Q: Whether it's for the long term advantage of the United States or not is another question and that is, really, my basic objection.

CHAPIN: Well, I clearly believe that it was not and that it was very important to establish the principle that the military had to take responsibility for their own dirty linen.

Q: I think politically _____ international politics it's more important, too, but that doesn't look like another case of Uncle Sam interfering so much.

CHAPIN: Correct. That's the converse, if you will, of the military stepping up and taking responsibility.

Q: No, I agree with your action but I just say that if your prime consideration was a performance bonus you might not have taken that action. Maybe I'm making a _____ point out of this.

CHAPIN: Yes. I think that the actual performance pay bonus that is received is, after deducting taxes and so on, so marginal that it's a nice present but I don't think that . . .

Q: It goes up to what, $20,000?

CHAPIN: Yes, but these are rarely given and people who receive those are already capped in such a way that they can't receive anything like half of the . . .

Q: Oh, the cap applies to those, too?

CHAPIN: Yes.

Q: I thought that was one of the things they did to get around the cap. It's just undignified.

CHAPIN: Well, it may be undignified but I can't seriously believe that many people would be motivated by the possibility of performance pay to take an action or inaction because the potential payoff is so uncertain that I don't think any rational person could take that as a very serious factor in his or her consideration of the matter. Although I must say that my experience in the Inspection Corps with personal peculation which did not amount to large sums leaves me in some doubt about the moral fiber of some of the members of our Service. Of course, I want to say, that this matter applied and applies to career and non-career ambassadors. It is extremely difficult and delicate when you encounter a problem with a non-career ambassador. Although, on occasion, some non-career ambassadors when the inconsistency with laws and regulations have been pointed out to them, have been very forthcoming and very pleasant in making appropriate adjustments.

Q: I would guess, based on experience, that possibly their administrative officers in the excess of desire to keep them happy, have perhaps led them to believe that what they were doing was all right. I don't know.

CHAPIN: We found the reverse, where administrative officers have been instructed, although they have objected to the individual, to go ahead and do so. There are obviously both cases, but I think it is particularly heinous if an officer and a senior. . .

Q: Puts pressure on a junior.

CHAPIN: Yes, and this we have found. Of course, another area in which we were active was in curbing the donations to ambassadors for a variety of purposes, particularly in Europe. This came out of our inspection of the Bureau of European Affairs.

Q: And Switzerland, as I remember.

CHAPIN: Well, that's only one of many cases but it was the Inspection Corps which highlighted the variety of different techniques being used and the questionable practices and led to a basic adjustment in those matter. Similarly, it was an inspection of the U. S. Mission to the United Nations which resulted in efforts to comply in some measure with the intent of Congress with regard to housing and the use of vehicles both of which have been seriously abused and regulations had either been ignored or no appropriate regulations had been issued to implement laws passed by the Congress.

Q: This was for housing for some people like US-UN was it?

CHAPIN: Yes, and _____also in terms of abuse rate or ignoring. The provisions with regard to use of cars and representation funds. We found uses of representation funds which specifically are listed in the regulations of the Department of State as “contrary to law.” I call that illegal. There are no penalties, however, in most of these cases for such actions and that's another area. . .

Q: Although you won't be able to get them to reimburse it.

Have you got something to say about the family and the Foreign Service? Do you think your family has benefitted?

CHAPIN: My career was rather unusual.

Q: You have an unusual number of rather difficult posts, I would say.

CHAPIN: No, rather the contrary. All during the years that my children were growing up or at least during most of them we were in Washington. We had almost 14 years in Washington and so our children were really not exposed to as extensive foreign experience as many Foreign Service officers. It was only once the children were of a certain age that we had posts that were extremely difficult. We did, of course, go to the Chad which was difficult but we've had our hardship posts but I think all Foreign Service

officers have. The psychological hardships in some of the last posts were greater than the physical discomforts. I don't think that any Chief of Mission as such has, but there were very serious security problems in both El Salvador and Guatemala. There were eight attempts on my life in Guatemala and there were seven attacks on the Chancery building in El Salvador during the 3-1/2 months I was in charge. There was a security threat, although a much lower one in Sao Paulo. In fact, I think it was exaggerated by the government and served as a method to attempt to curb my activities.

Q: Well, thank you very much, indeed, Ambassador Chapin. This will be a very interesting addition to our archives.

End of interview